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Wednesday, April 4, 2012
City Council, City and County of Honolulu
Public Works and Sustainability Committee

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TO: Chair, Stanley Chang,
Vice Chair, Ann Kobayashi,
Distinguished Councilmembers

RE: Testimony in Opposition to Bill 10, Relating to the use of bags provided to customers.

Chair Martin, Vice Chair Anderson and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to Bill 10, Relating to the use of bags provided to customers.

While we support the intent of the measure, we urge the committee to instead support language that favors consumer choice and applies fees for both paper and plastic single use bags at the consumer level. A fee for both plastic and paper bags would provide a more effective policy that creates a win for the county, consumers, retailers, and the environment. Currently, the state legislature is considering similar language for statewide implementation and we believe this is the best vehicle to reduce single use bag use. A uniform policy throughout the state would ensure consistent implementation by retailers.

This model would also allow retailers to fund education awareness programs to reduce overall use of single-use checkout bags while promoting the use of reusable bags. Since Kaua'i and Maui counties banned plastic bags last year, retailers were forced to increase the supply of more expensive paper bags. This has drastically increased business costs and because paper bags take more energy to manufacture and recycle, the environment is not necessarily benefiting from this change.

As you may know Times Supermarket is based on O'ahu and operates 26 stores with locations in Maui, Kaua'i and O'ahu. As an island base company, we understand the constraints of limited space and the preservation of the unique landscape of Hawai'i. It is for this reason that we support your efforts in mitigating challenging issues such as single use bags, and the disposal of bags in landfills and hope the committee will support this purpose through a fee on both plastic and paper bag use.

It is imperative that any action you take be tied directly to consumer behavior or it will not be effective in reducing the usage of paper and plastic bags.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this matter at (209) 957-2555, ext 153 or Bob Stout, President of Time Supermarket at (808) 831-0811. We thank you in advance for your consideration and we look forward to continuing the dialogue.

Respectfully,

Bob Gutierrez
Director of Government Affairs,
Times Supermarket and Big Save Supermarket